

# Chase the meth rats away!



## Rep. Tom Campbell 2<sup>nd</sup> District

Serving the citizens of Roy, McKenna, Graham, Spanaway, Parkland, Eatonville, Orting, Puyallup's South Hill, Ft. Lewis, DuPont and part of Tacoma.

November 2001

Dear Friends:

If you're as tired as I am of Pierce County's reputation when it comes to methamphetamine production, you would have as proud as I was recently to watch residents of our area dismantle, board by board, a longtime hangout for meth makers and users.

Stories like that can only help me convince other legislators to support tougher laws against the making and use of meth. Please take a few minutes to read this newsletter and find out more.

Seeing Americans rise up against those who would harm their communities and families – whether the threat is from abroad or down the road – makes me grateful to live in a nation that places such high value on liberty and allows its citizens to pursue happiness. I don't know anyone who wouldn't be happy to see meth makers put out of business, and I can't think of a better pursuit for the new year.

It is a pleasure and honor to serve as your state representative.

Sincerely,

Tom Campbell

### Olympia Office:

403 John L. O'Brien Bldg  
Olympia, WA 98506-0600  
(360) 786-7912

### Home:

P.O. Box 443  
Spanaway, WA 98387

### Toll-free legislative hotline:

(800) 562-6000

### E-mail:

campbell\_to@leg.wa.gov

### House Committee

### Assignments:

Health Care (Co-Chair)  
Children & Family Services

## Make meth users and producers feel unwelcome

It was my pleasure last month to join some community-minded people in taking direct action against the scourge of methamphetamine that has long plagued our part of Pierce County.

The action was the tearing down of a building – actually, it was more like a two-story tree house – where people had been making or using meth for years. The people were there because of a group called the Community Action Team (or CAT; its slogan is “Methamphetamines Eat Opportunity Out Of Washington,” or “MEOOOW”).

Plenty has been said and written about our state's meth problem. But nothing illustrates the devastation of meth like what we saw that day in October. On the ground, beneath the structure we pulled down from the limbs, were toys...presumably used by children as their so-called “parents” were above them, using or “cooking”

meth. We knew of the connection between meth and child neglect, but that scene really brought it home.

**Pierce County, unfortunately, regularly ranks first in the state for the number of meth lab cleanups conducted each year. CAT and neighborhood networks like it are doing their best to change that by chasing the meth rats away and making our communities safe again.** Law enforcement officers have noticed a change and describe the work of these dedicated citizens as being a fine example of community policing. I am proud to support them and encourage you to do the same. (Learn more about CAT at [www.meooow.org](http://www.meooow.org)).

## Children – the forgotten victims

Chemicals used in the cooking of methamphetamine can have long-term effects on children. The state has provided resources to the Department of Social and Health Services to recognize the warning signals from a child living in a meth lab. DSHS also coordinates drug abuse treatment programs and resources to educate children and adults about the dangers of all drugs. To combat the danger to children today, Child Protective Services representatives are being trained to better deal with both physical and emotional scars these children may carry.

## Meth laws still need more teeth

In 1997, back when just over 200 meth labs were reported in all of Washington (these days, that's about how many are found in south Pierce County alone each year), the state Legislature unanimously passed Senate Bill 5191. This bill categorized the manufacturing, delivery, or possession of meth as a “strike” for purposes of sentencing under the “Three Strikes, You're Out” law. Yet the strike classification was lost, before it could benefit our community, because Governor Locke vetoed that portion. He was afraid that making meth production a strike would not deter production or use of the drug, and argued instead for a holistic approach to solving the meth problem.



Rep. Campbell, right, prepares to move bags of debris collected from the meth “tree house” visible in the background.

Photo by The Dispatch, Eatonville

I agree that a comprehensive approach is needed to fight meth, but the strike classification would have been an important step in the battle to eradicate this dangerous drug. This past session, legislators again attempted to make the crime of manufacturing meth a strike. However, the tie in the state House and the Democrat majority in the Senate prevented this crucial piece of legislation, House Bill 1197, from passing.

Why wasn't it possible to get this bill passed even though it enjoys widespread support among legislators? There appears to be a major philosophical difference in the Legislature. Some believe meth is a law enforcement issue and favor equipping our police and sheriffs with more powerful tools to apprehend meth cookers while also ensuring stiffer jail sentences. Others believe it's a social service issue, best handled through treatment and other methods to keep meth producers and users out of jail. Regrettably, treatment programs have made little to no progress in getting meth users away from this highly addictive drug.

Treatment programs are an important part of society's approach to drug abuse issues, but until they become more effective in the treatment of methamphetamine addiction, it is important to protect the public and get meth cookers and users off the streets and out of our neighborhoods. I urge you to contact the governor and tell him to make meth production a strike under the "Three Strikes" law. Our criminal justice system needs this crucial tool.

Legislation passed in 2001

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5017, which:

- Makes it harder for methamphetamine manufacturers to assemble the common "precursor" ingredients of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, and phenylpropanolamine needed to make their poison.
- Makes it a gross misdemeanor to sell more than three packages of a product known to contain ephedrine, pseudoephedrine or phenylpropanolamine. You may have seen signs about this near the cold medicine supplies in your local stores.
- Provides a strong incentive for retailers to train and educate their employees regarding the dangers and criminal penalties of using or selling methamphetamine precursors.
- Provides reporting and record keeping requirements for the sale of precursor drugs, and make it a gross misdemeanor to fail to maintain records for the sale of precursor drugs.
- Give the State Board of Pharmacy a tool (\$10,000 civil penalty) to penalize those suppliers who sell methamphetamine precursor drugs illegally.

Funding

We provided more than \$1.4 million to the Department of Ecology (DOE) to establish a regional methamphetamine enforcement, training and education program, add three officers to the statewide meth lab response team, and add two experts to conduct crime lab analysis.

- Before 2000, the DOE's hazardous-material cleanup team consisted of nine responders who handled all "hazmat" spills statewide.
- Now the DOE "Spills" program will have four people to respond exclusively to meth labs. Representatives from DOE also work with members of the public to help them recognize warning signs. Educating groups such as landlords to the dangers and costs associated with labs have opened the eyes of many.

Ready for another try in 2002 session

House Bill 2082 would:

- Make it easier to protect children exposed to methamphetamine-manufacturing operations. It is not uncommon for children to be found on the premises when a meth lab is discovered, but the practice of taking children into custody in such a situation varies across the state. I am lead Republican sponsor of HB 2082, which would essentially allow authorities to presume that a child has suffered negligent treatment or maltreatment if he or she is found in a place where meth is being made. It's patterned after a mandate adopted by Pierce County, which makes sure a Child Protective Services worker is on hand when its officers shut down meth labs.

(Passed House 95-0 in 2001; failed to receive even a committee vote in Senate)

House Bill 1197 would:

- Increase the maximum term of imprisonment for the crime of manufacturing methamphetamine to 20 years (making it a "strike").
- Increase the portion of criminal fines that are to be earmarked for cleanup of methamphetamine sites.

(Bill passed by House Criminal Justice & Corrections Committee in 2001, but did not advance)



Chase the meth rats away!  
2001

Rep. Tom Campbell

P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
OLYMPIA, WA  
PERMIT NO 92